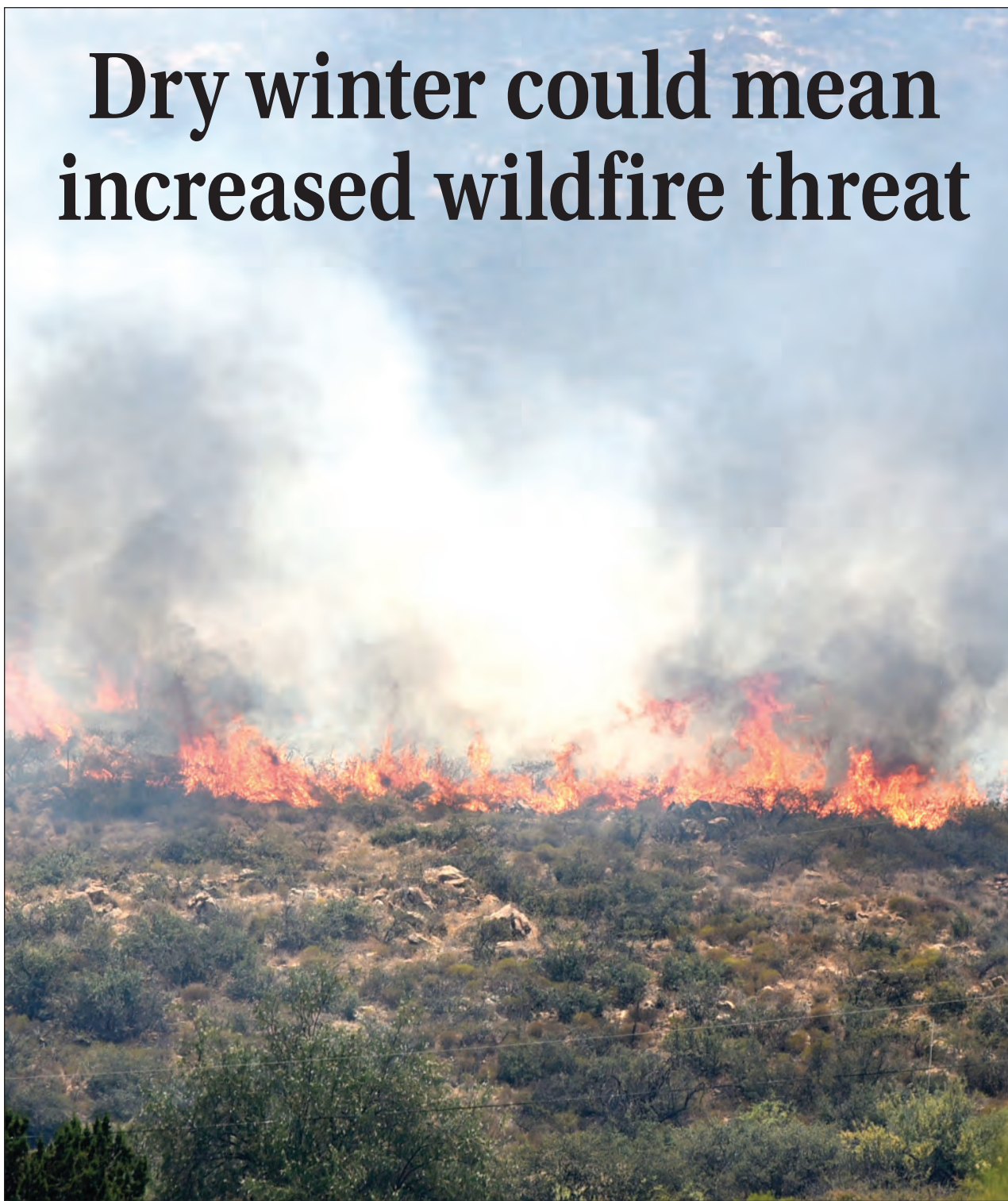


# Dry winter could mean increased wildfire threat



Fire season could come earlier this year because of the dry and warm weather we have been experiencing this winter. (Les Stukenberg/Courier)

## Governor asks for more fire prevention funds after dry winter

By SCOTT ORR  
The Daily Courier

This year's exceptionally dry winter has prompted Gov. Doug Ducey to ask the Legislature to boost funding for fire prevention efforts in the coming budget year, which begins July 1.

Ducey's office announced this past week its request for money to be doubled to remove brush and other dangerous fuels because the ongoing drought has vastly increased wildfire risk. The governor had earlier asked for \$1 million but now wants that amount increased to \$2 million.

The current fiscal year's \$1 million

for fire prevention wasn't completely spent, but Ducey is pushing the state Forestry and Fire Management Department to use all of the new funding.

It was warmer for January than usual in this region — 6.6 degrees warmer — and drier, too, with Prescott receiving only 1.14 inches of precipitation, or 0.45 of an inch less than the average.

Prescott tied a record high temperature of 67 degrees on Jan. 5, equaling the high on the same date in 2003, and again on Jan. 23, when it was 71

See **DRY**, page 10A



“Unless we see significant and repeated precip events between now and May, this summer is looking to be one of the driest — again — on record.”

— Pete Gordon of the Prescott National Forest

# Prescott's sales tax revenues up by 5.6 percent

Increase tax for PSPRS will add to overall growth

By CINDY BARKS  
The Daily Courier

Even before the City of Prescott begins to see the results of a new 0.75-percent sales tax, revenues from its existing 2-percent sales tax continue to rise.

The city's budget and finance director, Mark Woodfill, gave a mid-fiscal-year budget report to the Prescott City Council on Tuesday, Feb. 13, and the news was mostly positive.

For the first six months of the fiscal year that started July 1, 2017, the city's sales tax revenues grew by 5.61-percent. That growth is significantly higher than the 2-percent growth rate that city projected during its budgeting process.

The sales tax numbers do not yet reflect the new 0.75-percent pension-related sales tax, which went into effect on Jan. 1, Woodfill said.

He explained that local businesses are collecting the new tax and will report their first-month totals to the Arizona Department of Revenue (DOR) by Feb. 20.

“We'll get the reports from DOR in the middle of March, and that's when we'll know what our first month was,” Woodfill said, adding that the city would then transfer that revenue to its Public Safety Personnel Retirement System (PSPRS) trust fund.

The new tax, which voters approved in August 2017, is dedicated to paying down the city's debt with the police and fire pension system.

In recent years, the unfunded pension liability created a strain on the city's general fund. Upwards of \$7 million was required to go toward the unfunded liability in the current

See **TAX**, page 10A

## 2018 OPERATING BUDGET



# Senate panel favors new abortion requirements

Doctors will have to ask the woman why before the procedure

By HOWARD FISCHER  
For the Courier

PHOENIX — Women who want an abortion would have to tell state health officials exactly why under the terms of legislation approved Wednesday by a Senate panel.

On a party-line vote, members of the Health and Human Services Committee approved adding a series of new requirements for abortion providers in Arizona,

who already are required by law to inform women about the nature of the procedure.

If the new, proposed requirements became law, abortion providers would also be required to report their own medical specialty, the type of facility where they perform abortions, whether anesthesia was administered to the mother or the fetus and the numbers of women they serve.

Doctors also would be required to detail how many of their patients have asked to hear the fetus' heartbeat, something doctors already have to offer to allow under current law.

But the heart of SB 1394 seeks to expand existing law, which now requires only that the facility ask an open-ended question of why the woman wants an abortion, whether it is elective or for reasons of maternal or fetal health.

Under the new proposal, health care providers would have to run through a checklist of possible reasons with the patient, ranging from economic reasons and relationship issues to the woman not wanting children at this time.

See **ABORTION**, page 10A

# 17 killed at Florida school



Students released from a lockdown are overcome with emotion following a shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla., Wednesday, Feb. 14, 2018. (John McCall/South Florida Sun-Sentinel via AP) Story, 9A.

## Today's Weather

High 51° | Low 28°

Weather, Page 2A

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TV Listings ..... 8A Classifieds ..... 6B

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